

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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INFO USMISSION OECD PARIS

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 0115

E.O. 11652: EXGDS

TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, NO

SUBJ: A NORWEGIAN CANDIDATE TO HELP ARBITRATE THE OIL CRISIS?

REF: OSLO 19

BEGIN SUMMARY: NORWEGIAN COMMERCE SECRETARY EVENSEN BELIEVES NORWAY IS IN A UNIQUE POSITION TO ACT AS AN HONEST BROKER IN THE OIL CRISIS. HE IS PREPARED TO TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM HIS POSITION TO CARRY OUT THIS WORK. AS SUGGESTED IN OSLO 19 WASHINGTON MAY WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO SUPPORT NORWAY AND EVENSEN IN BRIDGEBUILDING IN THE OIL CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

1. COMMERCE MINISTER JENS EVENSEN TOLD ME AT LUNCH ON JANUARY 8 THAT HE IS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PROMISED ELABORATION OF U.S. PLANS FOR DEALING WITH THE ENERGY CRISIS. HE BELIEVED IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT COORDINATION BETWEEN PRODUCING AND CONSUMING COUNTRIES BE INITIATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO AVOID FURTHER ECONOMIC
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DISRUPTION AND CONFUSION. NORWAY IS A SMALL EUROPEAN

COUNTRY AND HAD REMAINED NEUTRAL IN MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS. IT IS CURRENTLY AN ENERGY IMPORTER, BUT WILL SOON BECOME A SIGNIFICANT ENERGY EXPORTER. EVENSEN CONSIDERS THAT THESE FACTORS AND THE DECISION TO STAY OUT OF THE COMMON MARKET ENHANCE NORWAY'S FREEDOM OF ACTION AND INFLUENCE IN ENERGY MATTERS. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT NORWAY'S RELATIONS WITH OIL PRODUCERS ARE GOOD BECAUSE OF NORWAY'S LARGE TANKER FLEET.

2. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES HE THINKS NORWAY IS IN A UNIQUE POSITION TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT BRIDGEBUILDING ROLE BETWEEN PRODUCING AND CONSUMING COUNTRIES. HE SAID HE IS PREPARED TO TAKE A TEMPORARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE AS MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO THE TASK OF BEING AN INTER-MEDIARY BETWEEN PRODUCING STATES AND WESTERN INDUSTRIAL NATIONS AND JAPAN. HE HAS CONSIDERABLE EXPERTISE IN INTERNATIONAL OIL AFFAIRS, BELIEVES HE COULD TALK TO BOTH SIDES, AND THINKS HE COULD PERFORM A USEFUL FUNCTION IN BRINGING CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS TOGETHER.

3. REVIEWING HIS DECEMBER TALKS IN WASHINGTON AND THE SECRETARY'S PROPOSAL FOR AN ENERGY ACTION GROUP, EVENSEN SAID THAT HE THOUGHT USE OF THE OECD SECRETARIAT AND FACILITIES WOULD BE USEFUL, ALTHOUGH HE SAW NO REASON WHY THE GROUP SHOULD NECESSARILY BE UNDER THE OECD. HE ALSO SAID THAT HAVING THE GROUP MEET IN PARIS WOULD HELP SOOTH FRENCH SENSITIVITIES.

4. AS SUGGESTED IN OSLO 19, WASHINGTON MAY WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO SUPPORT EVENSEN IN BRIDGEBUILDING IN THE OIL CRISIS.
BYRNE

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